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HB 434 RELATING TO CORAL

Statement for
House Committee on
Ocean and Marine Resources
Public Hearing - February 17, 1989

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HB 434 would amend Hawaii Revised Statutes, Section 188-68 by prohibiting the sale of stony coral of the taxonomic order, Madreporaria, and specifically the Fungidae or Pocilloporidae families.

Our statement on this bill does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

After considerable discussion and testimony from the Department of Land and Natural Resources and other knowledgeable sources, the 1988 legislature sought to provide greater protection to the diminishing stony coral resources of the state through passage of Act 374. This act prohibited the taking of stony corals except by special permit for scientific, educational or propagation purposes. Unfortunately, it is difficult to enforce this prohibition because these same types of stony corals are imported from outside the state, and, in their dead stage, they are impossible to distinguish from similar specimens grown in Hawaii.

We assume that the intent of HB 434 is to rectify this enforcement problem by banning the sale of Hawaiian grown stony corals. The bill will accomplish this intent. The Fungidae and Pocilloporidae families are represented in Hawaiian waters thus the proposed prohibition in their sale will provide the protection sought but not achieved by the previous passage of Act 374 (1988).

However, it should be recognized that as presently drafted HB 434 will prohibit the sale of all stony corals of the taxonomic order, Madreporaria, including those not found in Hawaiian waters. We believe a strong case could be made for such a ban as we understand that the world trade in stony corals, without adequate harvesting controls, is devastating the coastal resources. However, a full review of the issue was beyond our time and resources.